



# LOGICAL LASTING LAUNCHES

DESIGN GUIDANCE FOR CANOE AND KAYAK LAUNCHES

National Park Service  
Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program  
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Written and produced by: Caroline Wolf, Student Conservation Association  
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Chris Brown, Joan Harn, Corita Jones, and Charles Stockman

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# INTRODUCTION

This publication offers guidance in designing canoe and kayak launches for a variety of access sites. Descriptions, designs, and photos of launches are grouped into eleven chapters, according to type, with focus on the *point of entry* onto the water.

Comprehensive designs for access facilities (e.g., restrooms, parking, and signage) and legal issues are not fully addressed here. Resources for information on these topics and related issues are provided throughout the guide and in the bibliography.

While this guide provides general assistance with choosing suitable launch types for particular sites, each body of water's unique characteristics require individual consideration in regard to launch use and design. Development of any access point should involve local experts who can provide information on legal matters, hydrology and dynamics, riparian ecology, and other relevant factors.

Accessibility to paddlers with disabilities must be considered throughout the design and construction processes. The 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that "new construction and alterations of facilities [which include canoe and kayak launch facilities] are readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities." Standards applied to boating and other recreation facilities may be found in the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) issued in 2002. These guidelines are not limited to federally funded facilities; they apply to all public recreation facilities. See Chapter III for more information.

## ***How to use this guide***

Chapter I introduces essentials to designing a logical and lasting launch. This chapter presents five important factors to consider when designing a launch and discusses the relevance of location and water body characteristics to choosing an appropriate launch type for a particular access site.

Chapter II provides a quick reference chart to assist with choosing a launch type that can accommodate conditions or characteristics specific to an access site. In some cases, designs can be altered or combined to provide more effective access.

Chapters IV-X provide the following information for each launch type:

- A. General description
- B. Materials used
- C. Design specifications/variations
- D. Advantages
- E. Disadvantages
- F. Case examples, designs, photos - where these launch types have worked!

Chapter XI discusses several design options for access in environmentally sensitive areas.